Jürgen Paul
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THE STATE AND THE MILITARY:

THE SAMANID CASE

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States are, Weber's definition runs, "human associations that successfully claim the monopoly of legitimate use of physical force within a given territory". This seems to mean that where military activities, let alone military institutions, are not entirely controlled by the state, this latter institution is either very weak or entirely absent. It can be argued that Weber's is too narrow a definition.[1] Above all, it has been stated that in this definition

> "every single key word begs the historical question of when, at what particular date, the 'state' can be said to have emerged. The degree of success achieved by a government in claiming the legitimate use of physical force; the completeness of its monopoly of this, the assurance of its legitimacy, and the extent of its territorial jurisdiction - every one of these fluctuated during the last millenium, and every one admitted and still admits of *degrees*".[2]

If this is true even for Western Europe, the area where modern states first originated, the questions asked by Finer are all the more urgent in a Middle Eastern context.

Middle Eastern history has more often than not been written as a history of states (or, more precisely, of succeeding dynasties), and it is only recently that historians are beginning to find this approach unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, it seems that until now, the state has more or less been taken for granted: questions of the kind cited above have not yet been asked in a Middle Eastern context. It is furthermore all too frequently repeated that Islam is not only a religion, but also a political system; Muḥammad founded a political community as well as a religious one. Even if this is true (we cannot be altogether sure), it does not mean that the political community of early Islam was what we would call a state or else had to evolve into such an institution; moreover, it does not mean that such states as existed

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[1] Other definitions of the State are provided in Claessen, *The Early State*, and further discussed in Claessen, *Early State Dynamics*.

[2] Finer, 85. Italics are Finer's.

throughout Muslim history have conformed to the traditions of the early community; and last but not least, we do not have to suppose that statehood, once emerged, will continue to dominate historical processes. Not only may individual states decay and eventually disappear, and even sink into oblivion, but also the institution of the state, statehood in itself, may lapse.[3]

Along with this, we have to be aware that we tend to take the state for granted because we are so much affected by it in our own lives.

> "Things being so we are hardly able to envisage a state entirely different from what we are accustomed to. The Muslim state, like most others in the past, was concerned mainly with supplying two precious commodities: security and justice. Not more. The welfare of people - providing them with food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and other needs of life - was the concern of God [...]".[4]

Thus, even in this reduced set of tasks, "security", internal and external, the police and the military, rests with the state, and Goitein offers numerous examples and cases as proof for his assertion. It will be argued in this paper, however, that Egypt (as analyzed by Goitein and others) was not a paradigm for the rest of the Muslim world, and that at least some degree of qualification has to be added to the statement quoted above.[5] The question is, to what degree did the state in a given region of the Muslim world supply security?[6]

Historians and sociologists concerned mainly with the history of Western Europe have developed a distinction between direct and indirect modes of state government.[7] Such concepts have been shown to yield important insights into the

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[3] The breakup of the state in itself will not be dealt with in this paper.

[4] Goitein, II:404.

[5] Egypt may have been exceptional in that it almost never departed from its relatively centralized mode of administration. This in turn is at least partly explained by natural conditions.

[6] The paper will not touch upon the question to what degree the state was concerned with adjudication. In this respect, we ought to keep in mind that legislation was not among the tasks of the ruler, whether in Egypt or elsewhere. Qadis, even when appointed by the ruler, may have felt obliged to the law and its religious foundations rather than to the state.

[7] For a general discussion of the development of statehood in Western Europe cf. Tilly. For direct and indirect modes of government: Chapter 4 "States and their Citizens". According to Tilly, direct rule was achieved only after the French Revolution.

structure of societies like China under Mao Zedong.[8] Indirect rule means that the state, even if its power is paramount in a given society, is not able to exercise this power directly, through a closely controlled bureaucratic apparatus, but has to rely on a stratum of intermediaries.[9]

Indirect rule concerned most (or even all) sectors of governmental activity, most notably taxation and warfare. Examples for indirect levy and command of armies are the feudal host and early modern mercenaries. Knights bringing their own arms, horses and equipment as well as their own followers can only with some difficulty be compared to modern officers who, after all, do not own the tanks and airplanes they use. Mercenaries were brought to the field by military entrepreneurs who were quite willing to serve the highest bidder. Direct rule, in a military context, implies standing armies composed of natives (volunteers or conscripts). These appeared in Western Europe on a large scale only in the 18th century.[10] This should remind us that in a Muslim context as well, we should expect indirect forms of military organization instead of direct ones.

Rulers, army commanders, warlords and state-builders alike have to consider three questions in choosing, more or less consciously, an army: They have to decide whether the army they are going to have will serve its purpose (*effectiveness*), whether the state, with the means of extraction it commands, will be able to meet the costs occasioned by the army (*expense*), and whether the army will continue to obey its commanders and the commanders the ruler (*loyalty*).[11] These questions make themselves felt even if the responsible leaders do not take them into account. Military disaster, bankruptcy of the state or undesired military intervention into the affairs of the state are possible outcomes if they are not properly considered, so much so that rulers may be expected to accept considerable efforts in trying to have the army most suited to their situation, that is, the most effective and most loyal one they can possibly afford.

This paper proposes a study of the following questions: To what extent were military institutions controlled by the state in a given Muslim society? The examples will be chosen from the Eastern Muslim world, Khurasan and Transoxiana in the 9th and 10th century A.D. If there was indirect control, who, then, were the

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[8] Tilly ; Shue.

[9] Hourani, in his seminal article on the "Politics of Notables", can be cited among the first and foremost to have used concepts of intermediaries in the study of Muslim social history.

[10] For this, see Finer's study.

[11] Cf. Finer, 94.

intermediaries? If there was direct control, how was it ensured? What consequences did considerations of effectiveness, loyalty, and expense have on the evolution of military institutions over time? And finally, what can we say about the way military institutions and the state were connected? How did the role of the state in the societies in question evolve?

* * *

Before plunging into a study of the available source material, a note on slave soldiery seems in order. It has been stated that slave soldiers are the solution to problems of effectiveness, loyalty and expense in military matters that has prevailed over most of Muslim-governed territory from the early 9th century to modern times, the institution of slave soldiery having existed up to its abolition in Egypt by Napoleon and Muḥammad ʿAlī.[12] Developing a view most conspicuously taken by Ayalon, Pipes has explained the importance of slave soldiery in Muslim societies by a feature characterizing, in his opinion, the way Muslims behave in public affairs. According to Pipes, Islam, by setting unattainable standards as an ideal of public life, has discouraged and even deterred participation from a very early date on.[13] Armies were staffed by slaves since Muslims had retired from military activities to a very high degree. Crone, the other author who has written extensively on slave soldiery, shares Pipes' views as far as the involvement of Muslims in public affairs is concerned.[14]

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[12] Ayalon, "L'esclavage du Mamelouk", i.

[13] Pipes. The most fundamental critique of this book seems to be the article by Beckwith which formally is not a review. There is something of an ahistorical touch about the writings of Pipes and, to a lesser degree, Ayalon, in that they tend to give the impression that the institution of slave soldiery, after having emerged in the beginning of the 9th century A.D., remained substantially unchanged for nearly a millenium or so. - The specificity of the Mamlūks of Egypt is stressed by Garcin.

[14] Crone's book has met with substantial criticism, out of which the review by Donner is maybe not only the most extensive, but also most to the point. On Pipes and Crone, see also Garcin's study on the Mamlūks of Egypt.

Thus, scholarship since the writings of Ayalon has tended more and more to look on military slavery as not only very common indeed throughout Muslim history, but also as induced by certain features characterizing Islam as a religion. The question emerging from this strain of thought has been placed by Shoshan in a context including military affairs. The question is not, however, restricted to urbanites:[15]

> "[W]hy is [it] that despite the uninterrupted existence of urban life in the House of Islam, town dwellers were not entitled nor were they able to claim the right to handle their own finances and taxation, to supervise public works, to decide about matters such as fortifications and food provisions, to control weights and measures in the markets and, above all, to make war and conclude peace."[16]

The argument in this paper is that it is far too early to ask such a question. It will be contended that it has not been proved that Muslims, town dwellers and even rural people, were not, at least at times, in some places and to a certain extent, able, and sometimes even entitled, to look after their affairs (including problems of internal and external security). The stress laid on military slavery tends to obfuscate the degree to which free Muslims wielded weapons. The question therefore is not if there is a causal tie between slave soldiery as a military institution and Islam as a religion (Pipes' question), but: To which considerations of efficiency, loyalty and expense did slave soldiery respond in a given historical setting?

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State institutions are characterized in a way by the nature of their military base. The development of the military institutions in a given society may serve as an indicator for the development of the relationship between the state and the society it is trying to control.

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[15] Cook, in his comment on Garcin's paper, puts it like this: "[I]t is remarkably hard to find in Islamic history instances of what might be called citizen armies - armies locally recruited, by a state identified with the area in question, from a settled population that was not tribal". He goes on to mention the Ṣaffārids as one possible exception. (133). - The point is that Cook, even here, cannot think of armies recruited by somebody else as a state, however identified. Thus, he neglects all forms of "private armies" (e.g., those religiously motivated) and local efforts to repel aggressors. Even apart from this, exceptions might not be as rare as Cook suggests.

[16] Shoshan, 210.

If the state, in order to build military might, has to rely upon active participation of non-statal groups, it will most probably have to look for a legitimizing rationale: it has to give reasons for participation in military activities that are liable to convince a satisfactory number of volunteers and to ensure sufficient motivation. The question is, which forms of legitimation are available in a given context, and who are their social carriers? Is it a state apparatus which is in charge of mobilizing the volunteers, or are groups intervening which the state does not control? If the legitimation offered is strong enough, problems of loyalty may tend to lessen; loyalty, however, is not to the state as such and not even to the ruler, but to the legitimizing purpose and eventually to the persons embodying this purpose (leaders of volunteer troops or specialists for legitimation as e.g. religious leaders, see below). Efficiency may be another problem (volunteers may lack serious training not always compensated for by high motivation), though if military skills are well diffused throughout society and not centered in one or just a few of its segments while lacking in others, the efficiency of volunteer troops may well be high enough. Expenses may be comparatively low if volunteers provide their own equipment.

If the state bases itself on the military support of a given sector of the society, e.g., nomads, the remaining sectors, e.g., the sedentary-agrarian and the urban sectors, will have to serve as a resource from which the necessary funds are extracted in order to meet military expenses. The need for legitimation is still there; loyalty is once again not to the state as an institution, but to an individual ruler, in some cases to a dynasty. There tends to be a tiered process of transmission of loyalty: rank-and-file warriors are loyal to their immediate leaders and so forth up to the ruler.[17] But the need for legitimation does not seem to be as important as in the first case. Efficiency is ensured again not by systematic training, but by diffusion of military skills; as is known, nomads bring up their children (boys in the first place, but sometimes girls also) as riders, hunters and fighters. Expenses may vary due to the warriors' claims on the ruler. Possibilities of extraction include not only the non-military sector of society, but also external sources of revenue (booty, tribute).

If the state tries to build up a military basis entirely of its own, that is, to avoid the problems of loyalty arising in the first two cases, society as a whole is regarded as a source for extraction of resources. In this case, expenses tend to be significantly higher. By the same token, the demands on state apparatuses rise. Apart from extraction, the state has to ensure regular and full payment of stipends; there has to be a military bureaucracy responsible for recruitment, training and control of

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[17] It seems that the loyalty of nomadic warriors to a ruler can take on two basic forms: tribal loyalty which implies the tiered system suggested in the text, and loyalty to a charismatic leader which may transcend previously existing tribal bonds. Among the best studies of these phenomena in a Central Asian/Iranian context are Manz and Woods.

the army. Depending on the degree of monetization of the economy at large, state apparatuses charged with catering for the needs of a professional standing army (this is what we are talking about) take on a bulkier or leaner format.[18] Professional standing armies in a Muslim context have typically been staffed and led by "slaves". In these cases, loyalty is again not to the state as an abstract principle, but to an individual, mostly a ruler.[19] The question is: What happens if the state apparatuses cannot meet the army's requirements? What are the options open to military leaders in this case?

Thus, the degree to which the state makes itself felt in a given society depends, among other variables, on the format of the military institutions. Statehood can be expected to penetrate society most deeply in the case of professional standing armies ("slave armies" in the cultural context of this study). With nomadic warriors, intermediaries may be prominent, as would be the case with tribal chiefs. Non-statal forms of organization ought to be most evident in the case of volunteer troops; intermediaries may be those ensuring legitimation as well as small-scale military leaders.

On the other hand, communities and segments of a given society will react according to demands as engendered by varying military format of the state-controlled army. In the case of volunteer troops, forms of cooperation between local leaders (legitimizing and/or military groups) and the ruler and his governmental apparatuses will emerge. This cooperation is limited by the purposes given for military action. In the case of troops made up of nomadic warriors, the non-military segments of the society, the sedentary-agrarian and the urban sectors, are likely to look for ways of reducing the tax burden or to escape taxation altogether. In the case of "slave" armies, nomads as well will strive to avoid being used as resources.[20]

All three forms of military organization were present in Eastern Iran and Transoxania in the period from ca. 820 to 1220 A.D. But even the most cursory perusal of the sources is enough to show that change occurred not in a steady "upward" evolution to ever more developed forms of statehood, but that the overall

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[18] Cf. the results of Finer, Tilly, Rokkan and others. In a European context, the paradigmatic case of a bulky state apparatus of extraction designed for taxation of a largely non-monetized agriculture is Russia, the other extreme being the Italian city-state or city-empire (Venice and Genoa), (Rokkan).

[19] Cf. Mottahedeh.

[20] Taxpayers may, apart from avoiding taxes, also try to win control over the same and, by the same token, over the military in order to ensure that it is used according to their perceived interests. A classical case of such a strategy is condensed in the slogan "No taxation without representation".

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trend to nomadization is visible in the military sector as well.[21] Apart from that, all three forms coexisted most of the time; predominance of a given form never reached exclusiveness.

* * *

The Samanids, the dynasty which ruled at first over Transoxiana and parts of Khurasan, later over most of the area in question in the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th century, are sometimes said to have made particularly intensive use of slave soldiers.[22] Moreover, slave soldiery has clearly a Central Asian component and it may have originated out of pre-Islamic Central Asian institutions, whether Turkic or not. Military activities in Eastern Iran and Transoxania under Samanid rule are therefore the focus of this section.

The Samanids began their career in 204/819 as governors over different parts of Khurasan and Transoxiana for the at least semi-independent Ṭāhirids who had their military and administrative base in Nishapur. Ṭāhirid overlordship weakened in the course of time and was insignificant long before the dynasty's downfall in 873.[23] Just a little later, in 261/874-5, the best-known Samanid, Ismāʿīl b. Aḥmad, was sent to Bukhara by his brother Naṣr, who as the head of the family ruled in Samarqand. Bukharan ulama had requested a Samanid governor. With Ismāʿīl, Samanid rule began to spread over Khurasan and other parts of the Eastern Iranian world. Clannish principles, however, were still prominent in the ways of government. In the decades following Ismāʿīl (r. as Samanid overlord 279 - 295/892 - 907), the dynasty is said to have reached the peak of its power.[24] Following the death of Naṣr b. Aḥmad b. Ismāʿīl in 331/943, a long period of "decay" lead to the dynasty's overthrow by the Qarakhanid Turks at the end of the 10th century A.D.

Military power at the beginning of the Samanid period was in the hands of local people led by their "gentry", the dahāqīn. This stratum was precisely the background the Samanid family itself came from. The dahāqīn's power can be dated

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[21] Cf. Bregel.

[22] Ayalon, "Preliminary Remarks", 53; and idem, "Aspects", 207.

[23] Spuler, 77.

[24] In EI I s.v. (Büchner); see also: Frye, Bukhara. The Medieval Achievement, his translation of Narshakhī and his chapter in CHI IV. Frye's writings are at the time being the best available studies on the Samanids.

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back to pre-Islamic times, and the leading families of that period continued to play an important role during most of the first two centuries of Islam in Transoxiana.[25] After their conversion to the new religion, the descendants of local rulers made at times brilliant careers in the Abbasid army.[26] The Samanid army, at least down to the times of Ismā'īl, and to a lesser degree all along, was in part a volunteer army led by the *dahāqīn* gentry. It was such an army that won the victory over 'Amr b. al-Laith the Saffārid (at Balkh in 287/900)[27]. An echo of this state of affairs is found in the works of the Arab geographers of the 10th century. Muqaddasī tells us that there are 16000 settlements in the region of Chaghāniyān, and numerous warriors take to the field with their own equipment and animals if there is an attack from the outside.[28] Iṣṭakhrī states the same procedure for the whole of Transoxiana: from every village, at least one horseman and one soldier on foot will go to war.[29] The Samanid army, the geographers say, is made up of Turkic slaves and free men and *dahāqīn* "whose region and place, whose family and neighbours are known".[30] It is only reasonable to suggest that it was not a military apparatus, but the *dahāqīn* themselves who recruited the volunteers they led afield. In order to draft "one man per village" via a governmental bureaucracy, the state has to have a command of the

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[25] This is best shown in the case of Bukhara, since we are lucky enough to have Narshakhī's local history. A delegation to the governor in Marw asking to have the Outer Wall around the Bukharan oasis rebuilt was led by Yazīd b. Ghūrak, descendant of a prominent family from pre-Islamic times (edition Riḍawī, 40, translation Frye, 33). Similar initiatives were taken by local people concerning the Inner Wall (41:34), the minting of coins (edition Schefer, 35), extension and rebuilding of the Friday mosque (edition Schefer, 48, and edition Riḍawī, 59, translation Frye, 50). The overall picture concerning Bukhara is one of intense cooperation between the Arab governor based in Marw, the leading families from pre-Islamic times and the new Muslim élite, the qadi in the first place (the qadi is shown supervising the building of the Outer Wall, fighting the "false prophet" Muqanna', fixing rules for the distribution of water in the irrigation system and so on - edition Schefer, 4, 33, 67).

[26] The ruler of Usrūshana, called the Afshīn, is only the most noted of these. Other examples are the Bukhārkhudāt who equally served in the Abbasid army. The background of the Ikhshīd, founder of a (shortlived) dynasty in Egypt, is that he claimed descent from the princely house of Ferghana. Cf. Iṣṭakhrī, 292: The commanders of the caliphal army are people from Ferghana and Turks. He separately names (among others) the Afshīn and the al Abī 'l-Sāj family from Usrūshana, the Ikhshīd from Samarqand, various Sogdian grandees and the Bukhārkhudāt. The same author states a little earlier that the Turks make up the caliphal army, and that *dahāqīn* from Transoxiana are their leaders : 291. See also Ayalon: "Preliminary Remarks", 51 - 54.

[27] Narshakhī, ed. Riḍawī 105, translation Frye 89. The popular character of this army is stressed by Ṭabarī: III:2194, and equally in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 255.

[28] Muqaddasī, 283.

[29] Iṣṭakhrī, 291.

[30] Iṣṭakhrī, 291; b. Ḥawqal, 471.

society the Samanids certainly did not have; otherwise, conscription of this kind can be ensured through a stratum of intermediaries who control their constituencies closely enough to know who might be willing to go or else whom they might coax or coerce into going.

Thus, as far as military affairs are concerned, there was no direct rule, not even in the central lands controlled by the Samanids. The first stratum of intermediaries to emerge clearly out of the source material are the gentry, the *dahāqīn*.[31] There is a second one, religious dignitaries and leaders of religiously legitimated (and at least sometimes, motivated) fighters. But we will stay a little while with the gentry and the Samanid rulers' dealings with them.

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Since volunteers are so prominent in the early Samanid army, we will have to look for a legitimizing rationale with sufficient mobilizing power. Two possibilities come to mind, one material, the other religious. To deal with the material aspect first: The first Samanids (largely speaking, up to Ismā'īl), being little more than *dahāqīn* themselves, shared their power with this stratum. The second aspect, which evidently is the complex of *jihād*, fighting the infidels, will be dealt with later on.

The pre-Islamic regional structure of power showed a more or less nominal overlord (the Ikhshid of Samarkand) and a great many local leaders (in Sogdian:).[32] This situation continued with the addition of some more levels of (more or less nominal) overlordship, the caliph and the Arab governors in Marw, later the Nishapur-based Ṭāhirids. But regional dynasties still held considerable power; the titles of a number of such princelings have been transmitted in various sources.[33] These petty rulers were prominent above all in peripheral areas. But they (or descendants of such families) were important in the central regions as well. This is best shown by the stories relating how Ismā'īl got rid of them. After initial triumphs (against outside enemies and so-called bandits, that is, armed groups of popular origin) Ismā'īl thinks about the situation and comes to the conclusion that "the nobles of Bukhara did not show him sufficient honor. There was no respect in their

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[31] Archeological surveys of Transoxiana show a landscape literally strewn with castles.

[32] See e.g., Frye: "Ṭarxun - Tūrxūn" which offers references to the older Soviet literature. More recent archeological evidence is discussed in Raspopova. A discussion of rulers in Sogdiana cf. Livshits.

[33] Spuler; Paul, "Nachrichten".

eyes and their gathering together did not portend good for him".[34] The nobles did not think that Ismā'īl was in any practical way their superior (he was not even the head of the Samanid family at that time), so he did not have *haybat* for them; this expression means the "authority" coupled with kingship. The stratagem used by Ismā'īl is designed to take their power (and some of their wealth) while allowing them to keep - at least in apparence - their elevated status: he wants them to become a *noblesse de cour*. Before that and even for a while after Ismā'īl, though, the gentry seem to have cooperated, serving as officers in the Samanid army, above all the "volunteer" part of it.

The Samanid army seems to have comprised an element of mass mobilization down to the fall of the dynasty, even if these troops were reduced to an auxiliary status.[35] The contemporary Ṣaffārids (in Sīstān) also used a kind of peasant levy.[36] Even if they were not always of great military value, they may in some cases have contributed in attrition warfare. Sometimes, volunteers are seen to be hard to control, since they are all too keen on booty.[37] That this should have been so does not come as a surprise. The geographers as well as other sources frequently mention that people in Khurasan, Transoxiana and Sīstān are well trained in the use of arms.[38] In the story of an "alleged embassy from the Emperor of China to the Amir Naṣr b.

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[34] In Frye's translation (82), in the original: *dar ḥāl-i mulk ta'ammul kard wa ma'lūm kard ki ū-rā bā mihtarān-i Bukhārā chandān ḥurmatī ziyādat nīst wa ba-chashm-i īshān haybatī nīst wa az jam' shudan-i īshān manfa'atī ba-way rāji' na-khwāhad shud.* Schefer's edition 80, Riḍawī 96. The rendering of *haybat* by "respect" is maybe not precise enough. Perhaps "In their view, Ismā'īl did not have the aura of kingship" is another possibility.

[35] Terms are *ḥashar* and *rajjāla*, for instance: 'Utbī/Manīnī, I:307f, cf. 'Utbī/Jurfādhaqānī 177; 'Utbī/Manīnī I:211 and I:120, cf. 'Utbī/Jurfādhaqānī, 120.

[36] *ḥashar-i rūstā'ī.* Tārīkh-i Sīstān, 291. See also Merçil, "Simcuriler", I:74, and Bosworth, "The Armies", 554.

[37] One term for this kind of troops is *aḥdāth*. These seem to have had their own commanders (*ru'us*), but the "official" military tried to integrate them. The Samanid general Abū 'Alī Sīmjūr was named commander-in-chief of the auxiliary troops (*sipāhsālārī wa 'amal-i ma 'ānat wa aḥdāth-i Nīshāpūr wa Harāt wa Quhistān*); Gardīzī, 165, see also Merçil, "Simcuriler", III:122 and IV:550. Other mentions of *aḥdāth* in this meaning: 'Utbī/Jurfādhaqānī, 106, 120, 175; 'Utbī/Manīnī, I:303.

[38] Many mentions in *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*; see also Tārīkh-i Sīstān, 11, and Yāqūt, III:190b. Detailed references in my "Nachrichten".

Aḥmad", the author mentions infantry troops that obviously are local levies (*rajjāla*).[39]

At the end of the Samanid period, however, we learn that a group of *dahāqīn* who felt that this dynasty had outlived itself called in the Qarakhanid Turks.[40] This was by no means unusual: calling in the Turks had a long tradition in Transoxiana and was used as a strategy in "inner conflicts"; even internal problems in the Samanid family were sometimes solved this way.[41] A last effort of the Samanid ruler at Bukhara to win popular support among the urban population met with no success. He tried to bypass the *dahāqīn* as military leaders and ordered religious figures, the *khuṭabā'* (who deliver the Friday sermons) to organize the Bukharans.[42] At the end, thus, the Samanid rulers seem to have lost contact with the intermediaries who previously were active in mobilizing and leading volunteer troops.

In the first period, the Qarakhanid Turks apparently made use of the mobilizing power of the *dahāqīn* in a similar fashion, for offensive as well as defensive purposes. The Ilik Khan called not only the nomadic Turks, but also the *dahāqīn* for a campaign directed at Khurasan;[43] enemies from further East were repelled, as in the best Samanid days, by a *levée en masse*.[44] Thus, they seem to

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[39] al-Rashīd b. al-Zubair, 142. See also Bosworth's translation in "An alleged embassy". - Although there are serious reserves as to the reliability of this source, Bosworth seems right enough in assuming a degree of trustworthiness as far as Samanid military affairs are concerned. The account fits in with what is known from other sources.

[40] 'Utbī/Manīnī, I:163. In the Persian translation (which dates from the 12th century A.D.), the expression *ṭā'ifa min al-dahāqīn* is rendered by *jam't az ma'ārif* (92); it is well known that the word *dihqān* has come to mean "peasant", "tiller of the soil". The change will have occurred during the 11th century A.D. - See also Bartol'd, 318; Spuler, 99.

[41] Examples from Narshakhī (ed. Riḍawī): 45, 55, 97; also b. al-Athīr, VIII:415. - The tendency to lament the coming of the Turks as a decisive step towards cultural decay would not have met with approval by the *dahāqīn* of this period. Central Asia had long before been an area of mixed culture, and Turkic overlordship was nothing new; on the contrary, it seems that Turkic rule was seen as an alleviation when compared to the last decades of the Samanids.

[42] Bartol'd, *Turkestan*, 328f, according to Hilāl al-Ṣābī. The preachers said that since the Turks were just as good Muslims as the Bukharans, it would be better for them not to participate in the fighting.

[43] 'Utbī/Manīnī, II:82.

[44] In the year 400: 'Utbī/Manīnī, II:220. Only one example from Samanid times (in the year 291): Ṭabarī, III:2249, shorter in b. al-Athīr, VII:533.

have attained a certain social basis in the gentry. What reasons did the gentry have for defecting from the Samanid dynasty? Before turning back to this question, however, we will have a look at how the religious legitimizing rationale worked and how the Samanids were able to make use of it.

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Transoxiana, the central region of Samanid rule, has been one of the most important frontier regions of Islam for a very long period. Waging war against the "infidels" was the concern not only of rulers and their military apparatus, but also an endeavour which Muslims could voluntarily choose to participate in, particularly in order to gain the other-worldly rewards connected with it. This alone should suggest that activity in this field was not an affair controlled by the state to the exclusion of others, was not a monopoly of the ruler; on the contrary, conflicts over control of volunteer armies and legitimizing purposes seem much more likely. Relations between rulers and volunteer fighters may range from close cooperation to open conflict. Once again, loyalty of the armed personnel to the state, the dynasty or the individual ruler is the issue at stake.

At first, participating in military activities against non-Muslims was part of an ascetic lifestyle (*zuhd.*)[45] There are several cases on record in biographical dictionaries (a certain type of local history) where this link is mentioned.[46] Later on, however, this kind of practical asceticism was rejected by teachers of mysticism: "The true exercise of the spirit is not that you go fighting the infidels in order to get

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[45] This kind of activity is in one case even characterized as an ascetic exercise of minor difficulty, easier than spending the night standing up (*qiyām al-lail*): Balkhī, 84. In Sam'ānī, we learn of somebody who was noted for his asceticism (which earned him his nisba *al-zāhid*); he went for the *hajj* once in ten years and to *ghazw* once in three years (Sam'ānī, VI:239).

[46] Sources of this type include the Arabic *Qandiyya*; see my "Histories of Samarqand", especially p. 82; see also (one of the two extant fragments only) Dodkhudoeva. See also the earlier study by J. Weinberger. I overlooked this article during my work on the Arabic *Qandiyya*. Weinberger's results are very close to my own, as far as the history of the Arabic work itself is concerned. - Further sources: Sahmī, 304. - *Fadā'il-i Balkh*: 129, 251. - For the *Histories of Nishapur*, see Chabbi. - Ibn Funduq (p. 220) mentions that a family descending from the Companion of the Prophet, Abu Dharr, who was noted for his asceticism, was regularly involved in *ghāzī* fighting down to a man who died in 401 A.H.

killed".[47] Some fighters do indeed seem to have sought death during their *ghazw* activities.[48] But at least down to the 4th century A.H., we have to presume that for many men, participating in such activities was only natural once you took your religious and other duties seriously enough. These men did not necessarily fight out of political considerations; they did not want victory so much as the other-worldly rewards mentioned above. This further suggests that their cooperation with professional soldiers and officers cannot always have been a smooth affair.

From the 3rd century A.H. on, fighting the infidels took on a more organized and professional character. (The Samanids acted as governors in Transoxiana and parts of Khurasan from 204 A.H. on.) Comparatively large groups of fighters set out.[49] The question in our context is: To what degree was there cooperation between the Samanid rulers and the fighting groups? Did they have their own leaders and who were they? What do the sources tell us about military organization?

There are some people who appear to be leaders of *ghazī* troops. One of them is shown in an official mission, although not a military one; he is styled "commander of the Bukharan *ghāzīs*", and is sent as an envoy to the Simjurid amir in Khurasan.[50] This might mean that his position is an "official" one, that is, the ruler apparently is able to give him orders. But with other men in a similar position, this cannot be surmised. In the extant fragments of the biographical dictionary for Samarqand, the Arabic *Qandiyya*, several names of men are handed down who are called "leader of *ghāzī* troops".[51] At least their training, whether practical or

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[47] Ansārī's commentary on the statement of an ascetic (d. 303 A.H.) who thought that compared to the *ghāzī*'s way, all the mystical endeavours of the sufis were nothing but idle talk. *Tabaqāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 219. *badhl al-rūḥ na ān bāshad ki ba-ghazā bi-rawī tā tu-rā bu-kushand.*

[48] Paul, "The Histories of Samarqand", 82.

[49] Some 200 men were killed during a raid to Shāvdār (Arabic *Qandiyya*, ms Turhan Valide 70, fol. 54b). This is quite near Samarqand. Christians settled there in early Islamic times: Iṣṭakhrī 321, b. Ḥawqal 498. Frantz Grenet (Paris) told me (personal communication) that during archeological surveying, Christian graffitti have been found on some rocks there. If the *ghāzī* raid in question was directed against these Christians, legitimation is questionable if they were under protection (*dhimma*).

[50] Gardīzī, 165, dated 365. The man is called Abū 'Abdallāh b. Ḥafṣ, *sālār-i ghāziyān-i Bukhārā*.

[51] Ms Paris, BN arabe 6284, fol. 13b, 59a; ms Turhan Valide 70, fol. 16b, 23a, 165a, 187a, 188a. Detailed information: Paul, "The histories of Samarqand", 83.

"theoretical", was organized in the medieval Muslim way, as private schooling.[52] This would suggest that the rulers did not control the training available to volunteers and their leaders. A late mention of a commander of *ghāzī*s is in b. Funduq's *History of Bayhaq*: this man is in charge of the defense of the region during an attack in 378 A.H. Another person is said to have led volunteers to Tarsus (on the Byzantine frontier) regularly. No date is provided in this latter case, but no government controlling Bayhaq/Sabzavār in the period from the 3rd to the 5th century A.H. can have been interested in such activities.[53] Thus, leaders of *ghāzī* troops enjoyed varying, but mostly significant degrees of independence; they felt responsible to the groups of fighters rather than to the dynasty. Their loyalty was to their community and to the purpose of fighting the infidels, not to the state, not even to an individual ruler.[54]

Prominent cases of conflict demonstrate this state of affairs very clearly. In the middle of the 4th century A.H., the Byzantines regained the military initiative in the frontier region in Eastern Anatolia. Quite in keeping with the *ghāzī* traditions of Khurasan, large groups of fighters set out from there. No mention is made of any Samanid sponsoring. In the second case (where indeed Samanid instigation, but no direct material support is suspected), the Khurasani volunteers are said to have numbered 20 000. Even if this number evidently is subject to serious reservations, they must have been very numerous indeed. From the start, they were unruly, and their leaders were either unable or unwilling to prevent disorders. They came to Rayy

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[52] Sam'ānī VI:49, quoting a (otherwise lost) passage of the Arabic *Qandiyya* (or one of its sources, Idrīsī): Somebody called Muḥammad b. al-'Abbās al-Ghāzī al-Rāmī ("the bowman") was an authority in "the science of shooting" (*al-mutabba' fī 'ulūm al-ramy*), Idrīsī himself studied *al-ramy* with him for long years, and it was he who gave corresponding diplomas to the *ghāzī* leaders in Samarqand (*wa-bihī takharraja ru'asā' al-ghuzāt bi-Samarqand*). - I am aware that this man may have taught traditions and the like concerning the bow as well as shooting arrows in a more practical way. But since he is described as a friend of learned people, he may not have been a *'ālim* himself.

[53] b. Funduq 51, 124. It seems that Khurasani volunteers kept flocking to the Tarsus marshes from early Abbasid times onwards; a high point was reached in the middle of the 4th century A.H.; cf. Bosworth, C.E.: "The city of Tarsus".

[54] It seems that under the Ghaznavids, serious attempts were made to gain control of the religiously motivated volunteers. When Sultan Mas'ūd wanted to go to war in India in person instead of facing the Seljuq menace in Khurasan, his advisers told him that the task the sultan had chosen could very well be ful-filled by the *sālār-i ghāziyān* of Lahore: Bū'l-Faḍl, 531. It means that the *ghāzī* leader is at the command of the military leaders of the regular troops. Commanding the *ghāzī* troops is regarded as a government office under the Ghaznavids: Bū'l-Faḍl, 254. - There certainly was close cooperation between the volunteer troops and the regular Ghaznavid army in India. Merçil enumerates 17 campaigns of Maḥmūd alone: *Gazneliler*, 16 - 28.

which was under Būyid rule, and their leaders demanded that the entire land tax (*kharāj*) of that region be given to them, since it was meant exactly for the purpose they were serving, fighting the infidels and defending the *dār al-islām*. Not surprisingly, the governor flatly refused, and they started plundering and treating the local Daylamīs (Būyid soldiers who were shiites) as if they were infidels.[55] There are clearly two political principles in conflict here: The state (in this case, the Būyid governor) insists on its right to decide on matters of peace and war, and above all, of taxation, whereas the volunteers brandish the banner of their religious legitimation. In this particular case, no cooperation and no agreement is reached. But we have to keep in mind that this is a relatively late case, although it is quite interesting to encounter religious leaders in military functions.

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Ribāṭ fighting is another form in which cooperation between rulers and volunteers could be organized. In distinction to *ghazw*, *ribāṭ* fighting is carried out in smaller groups from fortified strongholds, often in a given season of the year.[56] The necessary buildings were sometimes provided by the ruler or other prominent persons, mostly military leaders. This took on the form of pious endowments made from the privy purse, not the state treasury (since it is uncertain whether the state treasury contains legally obtained monies only). The fighters, on the other hand, brought their own equipment and provisions. Towns and even villages all over Transoxiana and Khurasan had their "own" *ribāṭs* in frontier regions. Thus, in the vicinity of Paykand near Bukhara, there were

> "more than a thousand *ribāṭs* corresponding to the number of villages of Bukhara [...]. The people of every village built a *ribāṭ* there and settled

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[55] b. al-Athīr, VIII:552 (year: 353), 569f. (year:355). See also Frye in *CHI* IV:155; Bosworth, "Tarsus". - One of the Khurasani leaders was the noted shāfiʿite jurist Abū Bakr al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī who later came to be something like the patron saint of Tashkent: Castagné, 51f. His *mazār* in Tashkent is still standing. There are - in later sources - stories showing him as a *ghāzī* fighter: Jamāl Qarshī, fol. 71b.

[56] Cf. Noth.

a group. They sent them their living expenses from the village. In the winter, when the attacks of the infidels occurred, many people from every village gathered there to attack (the infidels). Every group went to his own *ribāṭ*".[57]

Other *ribāṭ*s linked to individual towns include: Dihistān which was manned by people from Jurjān;[58] Nūr, for Bukharans;[59] in Usrūshana, for people from Samarqand;[60] on the eastern frontier, there were several strongholds meant for fighters from individual regions or cities.[61] It is quite evident from these sources that at least until the middle of the 3rd century A.H., but in certain regions, particularly on the eastern frontier, obviously longer, *ribāṭ* fighting was carried out by volunteers organized on a local basis, with their own leadership and at their own expense, at most partly sponsored by endowments from leading governmental and military persons.[62] Thus, the role of the ruler in *ribāṭ* fighting was rather small.

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Volunteers in *ghazw*, in *ribāṭ* or other forms of warfare are often called *muṭṭawwi'a*. It is not always clear whether they come together on private or governmental initiative. Sometimes, though, they clearly have their own leadership

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[57] Narshakhī, in Frye's translation p. 18, ed. Riḍawī, 22. Paykand is suited as a winter camp for nomads. The quoted source mentions that this form of fighting fell into disuse in 240. The geographers (as quoted by Frye) agree that there were many *ribāṭ*s in that region. Sam'ānī tells about ruins he has seen there, only a few Turkmens were living there: II:404 (*Baikandī*). Some of the ruins are still above ground, but of course not 1000 of them: *Gorodishche Paykend*, 10 and 116f.

[58] Sahmī, 139, 149.

[59] Today Nurata, to the north-east of Bukhara. Narshakhī, edition Riḍawī, 13, translation Frye, 12; Arabic *Qandiyya*, ms Paris, fol. 24b (cf my "Histories of Samarqand", 86f).

[60] b. Ḥawqal, 504f.

[61] Muqaddasī, 273.

[62] Private initiative in military matters is further mentioned b. Ḥawqal, 468 (Iṣṭakhrī, 291): a man from Tashkent equipped many animals, horses and beasts of burden, and the sources stress that he was no official figure. Yāqūt tells that a wall of defense against Turkic nomads was built by a private person (I:500b with reference to Iṣṭakhrī). Private initiative in such matters is discussed by Māwardī, 236. He states that in a town where the wall is in bad repair, the affluent people have to see to its restoration if the *bait al-māl* (the state treasury) fails to do so.

and are at nobody's command. They base their activities on the well-known
prescription to enforce the good and hinder the evil which is a guideline for the good
Muslim life.[63] Examples (to cite but a few) are: The ulama and "volunteers" in
Nishapur sided with 'Amr b. Ya'qūb who had a caliphal diploma of investiture;[64]
one 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muṭṭawwi'ī had gathered a group of fighters in Nishapur
without the governor's consent;[65] somebody called Badīl al-Kishshī, an
acquaintance of Ṭabarī's, was active in Isfarā'īn.[66] But in other cases, muṭṭawwi'a
just means those men defending their village against an attack.[67] All these volunteers
did not think they needed an authorization by the ruler to bear arms and to use them.
They felt that Islam offered a legitimation for that; in this case, it was not the
injunction to fight the infidels so much as the prescription mentioned above. Thus,
even in a context confronting Muslims and Muslims, "private" initative leading to
some form of military activity is not at all excluded.

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[63] *al-amr bi 'l-ma'rūf wa 'l-nahy 'an al-munkar.* The consequences of this prescription can
hardly be overestimated. It is discussed at length by al-Māwardi, 231. See also García-Arenal. - The
mentioned prescription was (and is) used to call for Muslim participation in public affairs. Pipes who
thinks that Islam as a religion has led Muslims to massive and long-lasting abstention from things
political does not offer a discussion of this principle.

[64] Gardīzī, 142.

[65] In the year 205 A.H. Ṭabarī, III:1043; b. al-Athīr, VI:361: *inna 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-
Muṭṭawwi'ī jama'a jumū'an kathīratan bi-Naisābūr li-yuqātila bihim al-Harūriyya bi-ghair amr
wālī Khurāsān.* - The Harūriyyah are a Khārijite sect according to Sam'ānī: IV:134 *s.v.* Looking at
the names Sam'ānī quotes for representatives of this sect, they were also active in the East (Rayy and
Nishapur).

[66] Ṭabarī, III:1883, year: 260 A.H. [Badīl] *yuzhiru al-taṭawwu' wa 'l-amr bi 'l-ma'rūf.* Ya'qūb
the Saffārid then used flattery and other tricks to get hold of him.

[67] Thus a village in the region of Nasaf was attacked at night by enemies called *du''ār,*
presumably Turkic marauders. The *muṭṭawwi'a* fought back: *Qandiyya,* ms Paris, BN fol. 31b, ms.
Turhan Valide 70, fol. 91a. The event is dated 392 A.H. At that time, Sāmānid rule had already
collapsed for all practical purposes, so that people had to see themselves to their security.

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There were, however, attempts at integrating these volunteers into the wider army controlled by the ruler. The qadi b. al-Zubair mentions volunteers alongside regular troops. Like the infantry levies, they were organized on a regional basis. He even names their commander who does not seem to be known otherwise. These troops receive mounts and equipment from the treasury, if only, as in this case, for parading purposes.[68]

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The *'ayyār* groups of fighters have been dealt with in Iraqi and Syrian contexts.[69] But they were present in Eastern Iran also, in Sīstān most prominently, but also farther north, in Khurasan and Transoxiana.[70] In Samarqand, *'ayyār* groups are mentioned even before the Samanids' rise to power, and they are again (or still?) in place in the years following the dynasty's downfall.[71] In the latter case the fighters may well have had an organization of their own; at least, they had their own commander. In the account of the qadi b. al-Zubair, the *'ayyār* of Bukhara are seen parading with their flags and banners; they are organized according to neighbourhoods.[72] In Samarqand and in Bukhara, there were towers in the city wall called "the *'ayyār* tower".[73] But in sum, the source material does not give sufficient

[68] al-Rashīd, 141f. The commander is called Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Wāhid. - Volunteers who joined an army on an individual basis (and without the legitimation provided by *al-amr bi 'l-ma 'rūf*) were perhaps not called *muṭawwi'a*, see e.g. the report of how Ya'qūb the Ṣaffārid recruited such volunteers: Mas'ūdī, IV:200 ff. See also Bosworth, "The armies", 541. These were mercenaries rather than volunteers in that they were not part of a *levée en masse*.

[69] See, above all, Cl. Cahen's study, and Havemann. Out of recent studies on the city history of Baghdad, I'll quote only Mikhailova.

[70] For Sīstān cf. Bosworth, "The armies", 538 ff. For Khurasan: Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids*, 167 - 171.

[71] At the beginning of the revolt of Rāfi' b. al-Laith: Bal'amī , 1204; translation Zotenberg, IV:472. - At the end of the Samanid period: Gardīzī, 176; 'Utbī/Manīnī, I:341, 'Utbī/Jurfādhaqānī, 196. Based on 'Utbī: b. al-Athīr, IX:158.

[72] al-Rashīd, 145. From every neighbourhood, between 200 and 1000 *'ayyārūn* participated in the parade. The *ghāzī* fighters had their own banners. The two categories of men must have been separated at least on some occasions. - In this particular case, the author of the source may have been influenced by the situation in his Iraqi homeland and the period he wrote in (11th century A.D.).

[73] *burj al-'ayyār*. In Samarqand, this tower was on one occasion defended by a group under the command of an Alawi who was obviously not a professional military man: b. al-Athīr, X:113 (year: 482). The Bukharan *'ayyār* tower is mentioned in Mu'īn al-fuqarā, 71. It is of course only a

evidence to state the existence of town militias as distinct bodies of fighters having their own commanders, present and active not only on certain occasions, but also in times of peace, and forming their own organization separate from the ablebodied male population at large.[74] It is, however, evident that there were numerous forms in which "civilian" persons could participate in military activities, and that only a few of these forms were controlled by the ruler. What control there was had to be exercised indirectly, by intermediaries: the gentry in the case of *levée en masse*, specialized leaders in the case of *ghāzī* warfare, local leaders of unspecified background in the case of *ribāṭ* fighting and local volunteers (*rajjāla* or *muṭṭawwi 'a*), more or less popular (and at times unruly) elements with the *'ayyār* groups. The state could (and did) not "successfully claim the monopoly of legitimate use of physical force". Military skills, too, were widely diffused throughout society, and the state could not (and did not) control legitimation. It tried to integrate volunteers of all brands, and it tried to organize some kind of cooperation with various groups of fighters. But it is easy to imagine that state builders and rulers would feel uncomfortable as long as this situation lasted, and that they would endeavour to build a military force of their own.

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Thus, volunteers play a considerable part in military activities throughout the Samanid period. At first, the Samanid rulers and the social groups who were active in mobilizing the volunteers and providing the necessary legitimation may have cooperated quite closely. The first Samanids based their power on the gentry (*dahāqīn*) on the one hand and on the ulama on the other hand. That relations between the ulama and the early Samanids were good indeed is shown by a number of reports in the Arabic *Qandiyya* (and to a lesser degree in other sources as well) relating that Samanid amirs read the funeral prayers for prominent religious dignitaries, above all the qadis of Samarqand. But there also is a leader of *ghāzī*

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suggestion that it just might have been the local *'ayyārs'* task to care for these towers in war and peace.

[74] A number of references for the terms *ahdāth* and *fityān* are given in my *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler*, chapter III, section 3, "Stadtmilizen". - In-depth studies of individual towns may however yield more positive results, as is the case with Herat. See *Les histoires de Hérat*, paper presented by the present writer to the Table Ronde meeting on local history, Paris/Ivry, December 1993.

troops among the persons thus honoured.[75] The cases on record encompass the period from 210 - 260 (ca. 825 - 873) with only one exception, that is, roughly the period from the first nomination of Samanids as governors in Khurasan and Transoxiana (204) to Ismā'īl's arrival at Bukhara (261). Two more cases of the same kind are recorded for Balkh.[76] It also is significant that Samanid amirs were accepted as transmitters of traditions from the Prophet, but only down to Ismā'īl; later members of the family either did not care about Islamic knowledge or did not bother to ensure their acceptability.[77] Thus, some change in the relations between religious circles and the ruling family must have occurred in the times of Ismā'īl or a little later.

In some cases, religious figures went to war themselves. But their importance for warfare lay more in providing legitimation and legal regulations for it than in personal bravery. An analysis of traditions (ḥadīth) connected with the names of some religious figures in the biographical sources shows that they aimed at making it easier for people to depart for war. Other-worldly rewards were crucial in the fighters' motivation, and sometimes, ulama offered, in the guise of traditions, egregiously high remunerations for participation in ghazw.[78] It was indeed essential for the Samanid rulers to gain and keep the religious dignitaries' support: when the last ruling Samanid asked the Bukharan khuṭabā ' for their assistance in mobilizing the townspeople against the Qarakhanid Turks, they refused and thus sounded the dynasty's death knell.[79] The Samanid rulers, although they clearly had the gentry

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[75] 11 cases are on record in the Arabic Qandiyya, see my "Histories of Samarqand". Sam'ānī offers one more case: Abū Ibrāhīm Isḥāq b. Ismā'īl al-Bābkissī, d. 259. For him, Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad read the funeral prayers (II:7). This man was a noted preacher (mudhakkir), he also led the building of the ribāṭ al-murabba' in Samarqand.

[76] Balkhī, 214 (year: 239) and 246 (year: 244). Balkh was not under Samanid rule at that time. It was the governor of the city, Da'ūd b. 'Abbās, who said the funeral prayers. This man is probably a member of the local ruling family, the Banī Dā'ūd, cf. Narshakhī, translation Frye, note 297 (p. 150). Another case in the same source underlines the difference from later periods: In 471, a Seljuqid prince helped carry the deceased qadi to the cemetery. But this was not planned, and there was no political design behind it; he just happened to meet the funeral procession outside the city walls, and he probably could not help stopping and acting as he did (p. 326).

[77] Examples in "The Histories of Samarqand". Sam'ānī equally reports the teachers and transmitters of several early Samanids (s.v. Sāmānī); he based himself on the same sources as the extant fragments of the Arabic Qandiyya.

[78] Cf. "The Histories of Samarqand".

[79] See above, note 42. Bartol'd's presumption that the Bukharan populace followed "unofficial" preachers in this matter, is hardly supported by the sources. There is nothing to indicate that the "official" preachers had any reason to strive for the prolongation of Samanid rule.

and the religious dignitaries on their side in the beginning, eventually lost not only the sympathy, but above all the active support of both these groups. It can be argued that this was indeed instrumental in their downfall.

There is an episode which illustrates how much the relationship between the Samanid amir and his circle and the religious dignitaries had deteriorated. The amir in question is Naṣr b. Aḥmad (r. 301 - 331) in whose time the Samanids possibly reached the peak of their power.[30] At the end of his reign, Naṣr is said to have converted to the Ismāʿīliyya.[31] He was followed by an unknown number of leading members of the "civilian" administration.[32] This has been explained by the Samanids' drive for independence from the caliphs in Baghdad.[33] We know in fact too little about the Samanid conception of rule and kingship to provide decisive answers in this case.[34] The Ismāʿīlīs were eventually massacred after Naṣr's death by the "Turkish military".[35] As a consequence, the civilian administration lost much of its influence. But also such support as the Samanids might still have had in religious circles was definitely lost.

Thus, the second (or third) important group of intermediaries linking the Samanid rulers to the volunteer troops were religious dignitaries. They occupied

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[30] Frye in *CHI* IV; Bosworth, "An alleged embassy".

[31] See EI2 s.v. *Nasafī* (I. Poonawala).

[32] In the Arabic *Qandiyya* not formerly used in this context, we read: "Their force grew, and their missionary activities reached the horizons, and local rulers, powerful men and *dahāqīn* joined their cause as well as prominent men in the administration", ms. Turhan Valide 70, fol. 23b. See also my "Histories of Samarqand", 90 and note 49 for the Arabic text.

[33] al-Nadīm, translation Dodge, 468 note 71.

[34] It would seem plausible to explain the Ismāʿīlī flirtation of the civilian administration by a desire to have their own religious orientation, an élite faith which would set them apart from ulama and *dahāqīn* alike. What is known about the special brand of Ismāʿīlism brought to Transoxiana (it had a distinct Neoplatonic taste about it) is certainly in keeping with the appeal it apparently had for élitist circles. It would make sense, too, if rulers who are trying not to depend on forces in the midst of society whom they cannot control (the religious dignitaries and the *dahāqīn*) for military purposes were looking for a religion which would further set them apart from these forces. The failure to convert the military leaders, however, would mean that opposition between the civilian administration and the military had grown too strong beforehand. Bureaucrats were ever suspect of holding back resources the military felt they deserved. - For Ismāʿīlī doctrine, see Madelung.

[35] The Arabic *Qandiyya* says that the "military" (*hasham*) killed one of the most important Ismāʿīlī figures, the vazir Abū Ṭayyib al-Musʿabī (Paris ms, BN 6284, fol. 43a-b; Turhan Valide 70, fol. 105a). On this man, see EI2 s.v. *Musʿabī* and "The Histories of Samarqand", note 49.

themselves more with providing legitimation and offering legal and theological rulings for the fighters than with warfare itself, although in some cases, they led *ghāzī* groups in person. As happened with the gentry, the Samanids lost contact with this group, or maybe more or less consciously put an end to the tacit compact of cooperation the first representatives of the dynasty had concluded with the Islamic elite. Both the *dahāqīn* and the ulama cases show that there was no monopoly of the state on the legitimate use of physical violence. The rulers neither controlled the fighting groups directly, nor did they have significant influence on the legitimizing rationale. The state did not reach very far into society, but had to make use of intermediaries to a very large extent.

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Up to now, the focus of this paper has been volunteer troops. The gentry were important in that they recruited and commanded them; religious dignitaries, apart from personally participating in *jihād* or *ribāṭ*-type warfare, provided legitimation. Neither group, however, was loyal to the state or the dynasty as such. The gentry were loyal to the dynasty insofar as they held a share of power; the ulama and the leaders of *ghāzī* troops were loyal to the ruler insofar as he acted as a *ghāzī* himself. Thus, problems of loyalty were bound to arise. The volunteer armies could only be used in such campaigns as the legitimizing rationale permitted: above all, against non-Muslims, that is, against the Turks to the north and east of Transoxiana. It has often been noted that with the Turks' conversion to Islam, *jihād* warfare lost some of its edge.[86] Conversion on a massive scale, however, is reported only from the middle of the 4th century on.[87] Accounts of earlier contacts do not as a rule include conversions.[88]

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[86] Cf. Spuler, Frye, Bartol'd.

[87] Cf. b. al-Athīr, VIII:532 (year: 349), 565 (year: 354); IX:474 (about the early Seljuqid history); 520 (year: 435). This is supported by the somewhat blurred account of Jamāl Qarshī: The first country of the Turks to accept Islam was al-Shāsh (Tashkent); the dating is inconclusive: fol 43a, see also Bartol'd, English translation 255f.

[88] Campaigns of Ismā'īl: Ṭabarī, III:2138, year: 280 (cf. b. al-Athīr, VII:464f); III:2248, year: 291 (b. al-Athīr, VII:533). See also Bartol'd, *Turkestan*, 317. - The account of the 280 campaign in Narshakhī has the defeated ruler of Ṭarāz "accept Islam": ed. Riḍawī, 102, translation Frye, 87. *amīr-i Ṭarāz bīrūn āmad wa islām āward bā bisyār-i dihqānān*. The setting is characterized more by political surrender than by personal conversion. "Accepting Islam" may be connected with "accepting the rule of a Muslim overlord".

In some of the writings of the geographers, it is likewise taken for granted that the Turks are not Muslims.[89] Even if the geographers' accounts cannot be taken at face value for the state of affairs in their own time since they often reflect earlier periods, it seems that mass conversion of Turks had taken place only in a limited number of regions until the middle of the 4th century A.H. Cooperation between groups of fighters and the Samanid rulers in *ghazw* had considerably weakened by then. No important campaigns against the Turks are mentioned for the two rulers following Ismā'īl who is in fact the last Samanid to be credited with such activities.[90] Thus, the conversion of the Turks and a subsequent decline in *ghazw* activities can hardly be the reason why the Samanids no longer relied on volunteer forces to the same extent as they had done before Ismā'īl.

From the time of Ismā'īl onwards, the Samanids began a career of conquest. After his victory over the Ṣaffārid 'Amr b. al-Layth (achieved with an army composed mostly of volunteers led by the gentry),[91] Ismā'īl's military endeavors were directed more towards Iran than to the east. For his conquests, he could not use the "traditional" volunteer armies any longer. There was no legitimizing purpose for them in the eyes of the ulama, and even the *dahāqīn* may have been reluctant to embark on this enterprise. Garrisons in distant parts of Iran could not possibly be manned in the same way as *ribāṭs*. Empire-building was the issue now, not defending one's own country or fighting the infidels. Out of considerations of effectiveness and loyalty, Ismā'īl had to have a professional standing army. What he created, was a

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[89] E.g., Ya'qūbī, 295: They are surrounding Khurasan, and there is continual warfare between the Turks themselves on the one hand, and between the Turks and the Muslims on the other hand. In the same vein b. al-Faqīh, 316; this author thinks that the Turks are mostly *zanādiqa* which may or may not mean Manicheans: 329. Muslim Turks are living in the Isfījāb region: b. Ḥawqal, 510; *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, 117. Muslims are living in the region of *al-qarya al-ḥadītha* (Yāngikānt, lower Syr Darya), although it belongs to the Ghuzz (who evidently are not Muslims), b. Ḥawqal, 512.

[90] In the Arabic *Qandiyya*, in Sam'ānī and in Narshakhī.

[91] The Ṣaffārid could be seen as a menace to Transoxiana, so this was a defensive war. Besides, the Ṣaffārids were upstarts without any links to the pre-Islamic past. Ṣaffārid overlordship would have been altogether unacceptable to the Transoxanian *dahāqīn*. This is clearly visible in the account of envoys and messages exchanged between Ismā'īl and 'Amr: Narshakhī, translation Frye, 87f. Whereas the Samanids could with some degree of plausibility claim descent from Bahrām Chūbīn and certainly were of *dihqān*, that is, noble origin, the Ṣaffārids' claim to Sasanian descent was very much open to question. See Bosworth, "The heritage", 59.

"slave army" - he had the Abbasid model for that.[92] Volunteers were still used in many campaigns, but the core of the army was now made up of troops led by the ruler's personal retainers.[93]

When Ismā'īl became governor of Bukhara and tried in earnest to gain control of the region, he had more than one problem to tackle. As a wily ruler, he did not deal with them simultaneously. His behaviour indicates how much personal power he had (or did not have). He first cleared the region of a band of "robbers" (probably unruly elements), armed groups of popular origin. In this, he relied upon the nobles who previously had been in command. A "police chief" is mentioned; there is no information as to who the "police" were[94] (personal followers of this chief?). Ismā'īl himself apparently did not have significant troops of his own. He then had to deal with an enemy from the outside. Again, Ismā'īl "assembled as much of an army as he could",[95] so he obviously did not have a professional army at his disposal. After that, he tried to weaken the position of the leading families in Bukhara; he could not confront them militarily, but had to use trickery.[96] It is in Ismā'īl's dealings with his brother Naṣr, head of the Samanid family and ruler of Samarqand, that we first see a figure who may have been a "slave general", Sīmā'l-Kabīr;[97] but volunteer (ghāzī) troops from Bukhara also participated in the fighting. Since this was more than ten years after Ismā'īl's takeover in Bukhara, we cannot exclude the possibility that he had built up a military following of his own in the

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[92] The Abbasid slave army was created by the caliphs al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣim in the beginning of the 9th century A.D. It has to be noted that both of them spent considerable time in Khurasan. So, even if the Abbasid "slave army" is prior to the Samanid one, the model itself may very well have Eastern Iranian roots. Cf. Beckwith. - For the Samanid use of slave armies, the *Siyāsat-nāma* is frequently quoted as a source; so it is for the Ismā'īlī episode mentioned above. I personally believe that Niẓām al-mulk was to such an extent guided by political interest that his text must be treated with extreme caution. The stories about the Samanids are evidently told for didactic reasons; the sultan is warned against the Bāṭinīs who flourished in his day, and is admonished to keep his troops in good order.

[93] Bosworth in many places, e.g. "ghulām, ii: Persia", where he describes the structure of an army comprising ghilmān: "[T]he particular concern of the ghulāms was normally to act as a dependable élite force within the wider body of the army and as a personal bodyguard".

[94] Husain b. al-'Alā', ṣāhib-i shuraṭ, Narshakhī, ed. Riḍawī, 95f., transl. Frye, 81.

[95] Frye's translation, 81; ed. Riḍawī, 96.

[96] See note 34.

[97] He "had been a slave of their father, and was (Ismā'īl's) commander-in-chief", Frye's translation, 85, Riḍawī, 100. Slave is ghulām. In another context, Sīmā'l-Kabīr is called "client of his father", Frye, 28, Riḍawī, 34; client is mawlā.

meantime and that these troops were made up of "slaves" or "clients". His brother Naṣr's army, on the other hand, comprised the personal followings of the rest of the family as well as "the Turks from Isfijāb".[98]

Other names of military leaders from Ismā'īl's reign include Bārs al-Kabīr who is called a *ghulām* of Ismā'īl's.[99] He was governor of Jurjān. We are told that he collected enormous sums as taxes from the districts of Jurjān, Ṭabaristān and Rayy and had already sent them to Bukhārā when he learnt that his "master" Ismā'īl had died. He then called the caravan back and took the money himself. When after a while Ismā'īl's son Aḥmad succeeded in stabilizing his rule and came to Nishapur, Bārs fled to Baghdad with 4000 horse.[100]

Another one is the founder of the Simjurid dynasty, Simjur al-Dawātī. He is called Ismā'īl's *mawlā*[101] and was later named to various leading positions, among them the governorate of Sīstān.

We know next to nothing about the background of one of Ismā'īl's most loyal commanders, Ḥamawaih. He fought at Ismā'īl's side in the very beginning (in the year 262, when the Samanid's position in Bukhara was not stable at all).[102] A man also referred to as Ḥamawaih b. 'Alī appears in a similar position some 40 years later, quelling several revolts on behalf of Ismā'īl's grandson, Naṣr b. Aḥmad.[103] There can be doubts about these men's identity, but not about their (or his) loyalty. He is not referred to as a *ghulām* or *mawlā*, but on the other hand, his genealogy is not given.

A genealogy is furnished for yet another of Ismā'īl's commanders, Aḥmad b. Sahl. He descended from a family of *dihqān*s in the Marw region. Having been

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[98] Probably there was some kind of covenant with the Muslim Turks of that region. In *Ḥudūd al-'ālam*, they are called *ahur* Turks, those with a treaty (117, Minorsky, 118). In 299, during a "revolt" in Sīstān, "treaty Turks" *turkān-i zinhārī* sided with the rebels, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 298f.

[99] b. al-Athīr, VIII:45 (year: 296). - A man named Bārs-i Baykandī is mentioned as a military leader under Ismā'īl in Narshakhī, ed. Riḍawī, 105. He took part in the campaign against 'Amr b. al-Laith.

[100] Nomination as governor in Jurjān: b. al-Athīr, VII:527, year: 290. Flight to Baghdad: VIII:7. Arrival there: VIII:45. He was employed as governor in *diyār Rabī'a*.

[101] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 293. See also Merçil, "Simcuriler" I.

[102] b. al-Athīr, VII:281.

[103] b. al-Athīr, VIII:77; Narshakhī, translation Frye, 95, ed. Riḍawī, 111f.

molested and even imprisoned by 'Amr b. Layth, he took the Samanid's side of his own accord. He was influential all along and remained loyal until the amir Naṣr "made him promises he did not keep afterwards" (in the context of a "revolt" when Aḥmad b. Sahl's support was needed). The proud *dihqān* took offense and revolted, using his considerable influence in Khurasan, above all in the Marw region.[104]

These five examples will have to suffice to show that Ismā'īl's commanders (and those of his successors down to his grandson Naṣr) came from different backgrounds. Some represented the old leading families, some the "new" system of *ghulām*s and *mawlā*s.[105] Rather than insist on the juridical status of these men (whether they were slaves, freedmen or freeborn), we will have to look at their relationship to the ruler. But before turning to that question, a few summarizing remarks seem in order.

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With Ismā'īl, a change took place in the way rulers saw their position. Up to then, the early Samanids had more or less followed the pre-Islamic model: there was a nominal overlord in Samarqand, but he did not interfere much with his "vassals", the *dahāqīn*. Military power depended on their voluntary support. A new element had been introduced by Islam; the new religion provided a religious legitimizing rationale for frontier warfare (although frontier warfare must have been a familiar phenomenon in the region). This was now conducted as *ghazw*, *ribāṭ* or in similar forms, all of which presupposed voluntary participation and self-organization to a high degree. The ruler, not to speak of the state as an abstract principle, was the foremost *ghāzī* fighter, but not really in command as is shown by such campaigns as did not involve any initiative on the part of the state.

Ismā'īl seems to have been the first Samanid for whom kingship was an aim and a necessity. He certainly was the first really to rely on troops led by men personally loyal to him, not to a legitimizing purpose. In order to ensure his own position, he needed such forces, and he had - up to a point - to discard those who previously had made up the core of such military power as was at the dynasty's disposal. His attitude regarding the leading Bukharan families from the pre-Islamic

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[104] b. al-Athīr, VIII:117f, year:306.

[105] In Khurasan, Rāfi' b. Harthama is said to have introduced "military slavery" on a large scale. When he was defeated and besieged in Nishapur, "his companions and slaves left him. He had 4000 slaves. No governor of Khurasan before him had as many", b. al-Athīr, VII:457f.

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period is indicative of this; they all but disappear from the historian's record in the times of Ismā'īl. That kingship was indeed what Ismā'īl had in mind is perhaps best illustrated in the well-known story about the Outer Wall: When the wall began to fall into disrepair, he refused to order it to be built up again, saying: "While I live, I am the wall of the district of Bukhara".[106] In a way, he still brought about a synthesis of two very different systems of military organization: the "old" one in which the ruler was only *primus inter pares*, and the "new" one in which the ruler was *princeps* in his own right.

Ismā'īl's endeavour to build up an army led by his personal retainers amounted to the elimination of the previously prominent groups of intermediaries, the gentry as well as the religious dignitaries. He wanted the military to be personally loyal to him, not to a legitimizing purpose he could not control, and not to nobles who had a power basis of their own. The system of a ruler who runs a state through his household (or: as if it was his household) has been described as patrimonialism.[107] The ties linking the ruler to his retainers will be discussed presently.

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The most important tie between a military leader, either a "slave" or a man who had joined the ruler out of his own will, was personal loyalty. Mottahedeh has discussed this at length in his fascinating book on *Loyalty and Leadership* in a Būyid context.[108] This is a mutual affair: the ruler has not only rights, but also obligations; if these are not met, the relationship changes. The ruler can expect to be obeyed only if he himself proves loyal to the "slave". The examples cited above are instances of how this relationship worked. The military commander and governor of Jurjān felt loyal only to Ismā'īl, not to the dynasty; even though he had sent all those riches to his master, he felt that he had the right to withhold them from his master's son (as long as no new compact of mutual loyalty had been concluded). In this, there is no difference between this governor (who may have been a slave in that

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[106] Narshakhī, ed. Ridawī 41, translation Frye 34. He is praised because he lived up to his promise, but certainly this shows a change in defense politics: the center of gravity shifted away to the ruler and his military apparatus from the gentry and the volunteers.

[107] The term is, of course, Weber's. For a detailed account of patrimonialism as conceived by Weber in a Muslim context see Inalcik. Hodgson has decided to keep a reserve about Weberian terminology on general grounds in his *Venture of Islam*, vol. I (preliminary remarks).

[108] See bibliography.

he was bought by Ismāʿīl and brought up as a soldier) and the freeborn noble Aḥmad b. Sahl who likewise, after a long life of loyal service, became a "rebel" after having been slighted in a way he found intolerable: the ruler did not keep his promises, so the personal link was severed. Now, Ismāʿīl is praised because he cared extremely well for his *mawālī*.[109] He is the ruler who kept his promises, the ideal patrimonial ruler.

It has been argued that *mawālī* in a Central Asian or even Eastern Iranian (Khurasanian) context does not mean "client" if this implies an unfree status at some point of the *mawlā*'s career.[110] Rather, "vassals" are to be understood, the overlords being either the Caliph or else the local ruler; in any case, the Central Asian concept behind it is the status of *chākar* as discussed by Beckwith.[111] Whether this relationship involved a background of "sacral kingship" even in a Muslim context (Beckwith is in my view right in linking its pre-Islamic origins to such an institution) cannot be discussed here.[112] An army led by personal retainers

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[109] Narshakhī, transl. Frye, 28, ed. Riḍawī, 34.

[110] Beckwith, 31; Crone, 78.

[111] In his study quoted more than once. Numerous examples could be added to his. I will restrict myself to two of them. First, in the hagiographic sources not normally consulted in these matters, *chākar* is found in the meaning of "personal retainer (bound by personal loyalty or oath), but not a slave". The vazir Bū Manṣūr Warqānī kept his master, the Seljuqid Ṭughrıl, waiting, because he had not yet finished his prayer:

> "I am God's slave and your *chākar*. As long as I have not fulfilled God's orders and have not completed what God's slave has to do, I shall not begin with my obligations as your *chākar*. If you want a vazir who is not God's slave but entirely your *chākar*, I shall go home now." (Muḥammad b. al-Munawwar, 319).

The same source shows a sayyid and a band of his followers who are called his *chākarān* who are trying to confront shaykh Abū Saʿīd, *ibid.*, 221f. - Second, in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, *mawlā* clearly denotes a notable. A prominent case is Muḥammad b. Hurmuz, called "Mawlā Sandalī", 297ff, see also b. al-Athīr, VIII:69. Another instance *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 299-301. Both these examples are dated around 300 A.H.

[112] But certainly the number and quality of retainers flocking to a ruler or a pretender has to do with that person's charisma. Inalcik, 55, stresses that the origins of the patrimonial household (even in the Ottoman case) are to be traced back to the "warband of *nōkers* or *yoldash*" typical of every conqueror in the steppe. See also the studies of B. Manz and J. Wood.

in this understanding seems to have been the only structure available to Ismā'īl in his endeavour to build an empire (meaning conquest): It was the only one he could expect to be loyal to him given the purpose he had in mind. Considerations of effectiveness and loyalty were thus instrumental in his choice of such a military format. What, then, about considerations of expense?

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An army led by personal retainers certainly was more expensive than the army of the "old" format made up of volunteers and led by gentry commanders. In the first place, a standing professional army is, as a general rule, more demanding on the state coffers than a non-professional one, since it has to be paid even while not on campaign. But above all, personal retainers acquire claims on their master he will have to meet in order to ensure their loyalty. It is useful in this context to remember that the personal tie between retainer and ruler was a mutual one. The central concept here was *ni'ma*, "benefit".[113] This is quite material, "benefit" meaning more often than not money or opportunities of making money. Even more abstract "honours" expressed in the system of ranking going with them not infrequently involve positions which either can be translated into material terms or else increased influence which boils down to the same thing. The *Qutadgu Bilig* more than once or twice underlines that a ruler has to be generous in order to have loyal troops.[114]

Even in the most ideal of cases, when both the ruler and the retainers are faithfully keeping their obligations, problems are liable to emerge. Every individual retainer will strive to earn as much "benefit" as possible and to get the ruler to prefer him over the others. Such built-in competition can have a positive effect on the army's loyalty and effectiveness as long as resources are plentiful and their allocation is in firm control. But as soon as resources become scarce and/or control weakens,

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[113] See the extensive discussion in Mottahedeh. The master is called *walī al-ni'ma*, the retainer owes "gratitude" *shukr*, if he falls short of this, he is accused of *kufrān al-ni'ma* and so on. All these expressions are technical terms for certain types of behaviour.

[114] E.g., verses 2057, 2808, 3031, 5476, 5514, 5591. The source also differentiates between troops loyally serving a ruler who conforms to the principles of kingship as laid down in the book on the one hand and slaves on the other. The ruler is warned: "Free-born men will gladly serve one with these qualities [that is, one who treats the fighters well] and sacrifice themselves for his happiness", verse 4406 in Dankoff's translation. The original (and with it the Turkish translation) is more explicit in saying that free-born men will become such a ruler's slaves. After that, the ruler is told not to spend his treasure on slaves but on such free-born men (who will serve him better).

distribution coalitions between retainers and groups of retainers are likely to form.[115] The last decades of Samanid rule are, as is well known, characterized by more or less continuous struggle over provinces, governorships and the like; most of the acting parties were commanders of "slave troops". Every time a ruler (or the civil administration in Bukhara) tried to regain control over the allocation of resources, the answer was "revolt".[116] Resources could no longer be enlarged by conquest, and thus, from a shrinking pie more and more commanders demanded ever increasing slices. In more than one case, military leaders distributed the coveted posts among themselves without bothering to ask the ruler or the administration in Bukhara. Very quickly, the possibilities of extraction available to the Samanids proved unsatisfactory for military needs. From Nūḥ b. Naṣr (r. 331 - 343/943 - 54) on at latest, there was a financial crisis.[117]

The increasing demands on the financial apparatus are illustrated by a story from Sīstān. Shortly after the Samanids had conquered this rich region (the conquest was a difficult and protracted affair which took place in the reign of Aḥmad b. Ismā'īl around 300 A.H.), they had to increase the taxes because the salaries of the Khurasani army were higher than the 1 million dirham Sīstān yielded formerly. With that, the soldiers had to be accomodated with the inhabitants.[118] Revolt was not slow to break out. Its leader complained that "it is not customary in Sīstān to

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[115] See "Olson's theory" on distribution coalitions.

[116] This is e.g. recounted by Mīrkhwānd, IV:70f. Since Maḥmūd (the later Ghaznavid ruler) is unable to regain his ancient position after his father's death, he thinks that he has fallen into disgrace. He cannot accept the answer given, namely, that Begtuzun (another "slave" general) who has been given the governorate of Khurasan (indeed one of the most important spoils) has an advantage over him because of his seniority. The real reason for preferring Begtuzun was that he was the only military commander at hand to repel the menacing Turks. Begtuzun himself was not satisfied with what he got and, having formed a coalition with the "turncoat Faiq" (Frye, "Samanids", 156), deposed the amir, a mere boy. After that, Maḥmūd was convinced that the Samanid dynasty was on the decline. - For several cases of continuity in the inner circle of Samanid and Qarakhanid rule see now Kochnev.

[117] See Bosworth, "Nūḥ b. Naṣr": "The costs of quelling internal rebelliousness and of the wars in northern Persia caused a financial crisis during Nūḥ's reign, with the army often going unpaid and the subjects complaining of increased taxation". Bosworth adds that subsequent rulers were not able to improve this situation.

[118] This is one of the most odious things an army can do since it fundamentally disturbs people's lives. Even if there is no outright transgression, women have to behave very differently if there is a stranger in the house. People expect that an army stay in its camp, *lashkargāh*. If a camp is not at hand, barracks have to be constructed. See also the legend of how 'Abdallāh b. Ṭāhir built the garrison town of Shādyākh near Nishapur, e.g. in b. al-Athīr, XI:273, also in Yāqūt, III:305b s.v. *Shādyākh*.

increase taxes".[119] The revolt was quelled, but it is not clear whether the Samanids ever were able to take in the increased taxes.

This example also shows that the troops in the outer regions (far from Bukhara) had to levy the taxes needed for their upkeep where they were without help from the center. Later on, the military commanders flatly refused to pay the central divan anything. This was maybe not only insubordination, but a necessity: they had so many troops they had to provide for that the resources available in their province were hardly enough.[120] As a rule, military commanders were assigned a province as governors. Only in some cases did they have to deduct anything from the province's income for such purposes as the upkeep of fortresses and the like.[121]

Thus, the retainers were quite rational in demanding an ever larger part of the empire's resources. They had to pay their troops in order to keep them. In sum, they had evolved into a new group of intermediaries: the ruler held military power only as long as he could get one of the slave generals to provide him with troops. But the "slave generals" were not rooted in society in the same way the gentry or the religious dignitaries were; on the contrary, their mobility has often been stressed. Their services had to be bought, as no legitimizing rationale could convince them. Their loyalty depended more and more on the extraction capacities provided by the civilian administration.

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To come to a conclusion: In my view, slave soldiery is by no means a direct consequence of Islam as a religion. In Eastern Iran and Transoxiana at least, Muslims did not abandon military affairs; most men, town dwellers and rurals alike, were skilled (to a degree) in the use of weapons. The *dahāqīn*, as intermediaries, were instrumental in mobilizing and organizing local troops and leading them afield. Garcin seems to agree with Crone: "[I]f a military aristocracy [...] had developed in the 'Abbāsid era, the constitution of regiments of slave origin might have been

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[119] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 297 f.

[120] Abū 'Alī Sīmjūr had taken over all of Khurasan "and divided the tax monies between his followers. Nūḥ b. Manṣūr asked him to leave some of the province to the administration of the Personal Divan (*dīwān-i khāṣṣ*). He refused" and gave as a reason that his followers (*ḥasham*) were so numerous that he not only could not waive any of his income, but he also had to ask for more. 'Utbī/Jurfādhaqānī, 91. See also Merçil, "Simcuriler", IV:550f.

[121] 'Utbī/Jurfādhaqānī, 65, 76.

avoided".[122] The point is: there *was* a military aristocracy, at least in the area under study, and it was active well beyond that area. In this respect, there was no need to use slaves as soldiers. They were *preferred* because rulers thought they would be more dependable than volunteer troops led by gentry intermediaries. Not considerations of effectiveness, but of loyalty were the issue.[123] The Samanids could at first well afford to have troops loyal to the ruler only, and they did all they could to separate themselves from the intermediary strata they previously had depended on. The possibilities of extraction their civilian governmental apparatus commanded were however not large enough to ensure permanent loyalty. The reasons for this are to be looked for in the economy of their time.[124] The Samanid state broke up because it no longer controlled the links between military format (the increasing demands of the "slave generals") on the one hand and extraction and allocation of resources on the other hand. The Samanid rulers had tried to build an autonomous state in order to exclude intermediaries from power; these intermediaries, however, were not eliminated. In the end, they not only turned their backs on the last Samanid rulers, but actively supported the next dynasty.

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[122] Garcin, 117.

[123] Slave armies were not more effective than other armies of the day. Time and again, they suffered crushing defeats at the hand of nomads, the first instance being the Ghaznavid disaster at Dandānaqān in 1040 (A.D.) against the Seljuqs.

[124] This is not the place to discuss Samanid economics. Their resources comprised land tax, revenue from trade, above all slave trade, and income from silver mines. One of the most salient features is the constant drain of specie to Eastern Europe, where enormous amounts of Samanid silver have been found. Which kind of income was most important is hard to guess.

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